



INNOVATION 2030+

An International Symposium: Advancing Creative Solutions for Global Development

Summary Report





McGill



THE GLOBAL GOALS
For Sustainable Development

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INTRODUCTION

In September of 2015, all heads of state signed the declaration of Agenda 2030 at the UN General Assembly, committing their governments to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the year 2030. It's hard to imagine how all 17 SDGs, most of which intimidatingly ambitious, can be achieved for a projected world population of 9 billion.

This one-day symposium convened by McGill University was used to discuss the challenges associated with achieving the SDGs, and to explore the various innovation pathways that could help to meet the targets for 2030.

Innovation 2030+ brought together over 100 individuals from a vibrant variety of backgrounds to discuss moving forward in a world framed by these 17 new goals for sustainable development. Speakers included experts from various international development agencies, public policy think-tanks, research institutions, NGOs, and philanthropic foundations, while the participants consisted of students, staff, alumni, and development experts from the Quebec-Montreal-Ottawa corridor. Although diverse in disciplinary backgrounds, the symposium's success was due to the common interests in areas of agriculture, food security, nutrition, water, environment and economics, and the shared commitment to creating a better world for future generations.



PROGRAM

The symposium began with a Keynote address that looked to introduce the theory that went into the development of the SDGs. This was followed by two panel discussions: one on technological innovation, and the other on financial innovation, both of which were comprised of 4 speakers whose current work aligns with the topics, respectively.

A working lunch was then conducted wherein the speakers were divided into groups of participants. In the form of a mini-hackathon, each group was assigned a different perspective to embody, and needed to come up with an innovative way to approaching SDG 17.7. Leaders from each of the mini-hackathon groups were then invited to present their solutions to the symposium. After lunch, four student-based student start-ups were given two minutes each to pitch their innovative ideas to a panel of judges, from which a winner was chosen and given a \$1500 award sponsored by Mitacs.

Another Keynote address was given on the subject of Inclusive Growth and Inclusive Economies, followed by the forming of a consensus from two other speakers. The symposium concluded with some closing remarks and a networking cocktail wherein participants were given the opportunity to engage with the speakers on their own terms.



MOVING FROM THE MDGs TO THE SDGs: HOW REALISTIC?

- Even after the MDGs, there still remains a staggering prevalence of poverty and nutrition-related suffering internationally.
- Canada has been lacking progress on issues relating to water, sanitation, and First Nations communities.
- We must challenge the duality of economic growth and environmental sustainability.
- 17 goals allow everyone to feel as though their priorities have been included.
- Social innovation is just as important as technological innovation.
- Universities will be playing an integral role moving forward towards 2030, as it will be the new generation that will be achieving the SDGs.
- Emphasis must be placed on the role of partnerships in achieving the SDGs.

HARNESSING SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

- Investments in research and extensions will need to triple to meet the SDGs by 2030.
- There is too big of a gap between innovation and implementation.
- Some SDGs reinforce each other while some also hinder each other; how to overcome?
- When government budgets for development begin to plateau, private donors (and their interests) fill the gap.
- Sustainable intensification is needed; achieved through scientific R&D.
- Farmers are not resistant to change, they are risk averse.
 - Innovation must be properly and fully communicated to them, and customized to fit their case-specific situation and needs.
- Future of agricultural innovation lies in agroecology, biotechnology, and capacity development with a focus on female farmers.
- There will never be a silver bullet to achieving the SDGs - innovation must be applied only where it is appropriate; as different solutions will come out of different locations.



INCLUSIVE GROWTH

- Huge gaps exist within land tenure and inheritance systems wherein women and other vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected.
- Agricultural sector is notoriously difficult to finance; its low capital for investment contributes to stunted development
- Decent land laws and policy often don't trickle down to all community members.
 - Little transparency has created a differentiated awareness of rights.
- As customary laws often take priority in rural areas, social norms must be considered when framing solutions to the SDGs.
- An unstable and ever-changing political climate will often skew the long-term sustainability of solutions; building bridges is essential to staying on track with goals.
- Peer groups allow community members to support each other and collectively seek change - building innovation up from the local level.
- As financial literacy can be low, partnerships between stakeholders and financial institutions or service providers are important to ensure crucial assets such as credit and insurance become accessible.
 - Services such as conditional cash transfers, mobile banking, index-based insurance products, etc.
- Urban areas with higher education rates and better land rights laws provide an example for how dynamism can be used in rural areas.
- There needs to be a common language between the supply and demand of financing along the agricultural value chain that can intersect urban and rural areas.



GENERATING CREATIVE IDEAS AND SOLUTIONS FOR AGENDA 2030 (WORKING LUNCH)

“[how to] promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favorable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed” ?

- SDG 17.7



TWO- MINUTE PITCHES: INNOVATIVE START-UPS

Avocado Desserts (avocadodesserts.com): This start-up is redefining the snacking industry by making delicious food healthy. They substitute unhealthy fatty products and excess sugar with a lightly sweetened avocado cream, and use small amounts of low glycemic sweeteners to create a variety of desserts that are indulgent and more nutritionally appropriate.

Groundit (Winner of the \$1500 innovation award donated by Mitacs) (groundit.ca): This start-up aims to tackle the issue of food waste in tandem with risks of synthetic fertilizers. Groundit collects used coffee grounds from a variety of coffee shops in Montreal and combines it with food waste from cafés to create an affordable, organic fertilizer.

ProtERA (proterafarms.com): This start-up produces black soldier flies as feed for poultry and fish in Mali. Their goal is to reduce the environmental impact of animal feed and improve its efficiency, as the larvae provides a more affordable and ecologically sustainable protein source, feasible for farms of all sizes.

YUMiBOX (yumibox.com): This start-up wants to make healthy eating fun, delicious, simple, and enjoyable without any stress or confusion. YUMiBOX sells portion-controlled servings of whole grains that have long been left out of the public eye. All meals are designed and created in the McGill Food Laboratories by dietitians, nutrition PhDs, chefs, and food bloggers.



POLICY FRAMEWORK TO ACHIEVE AGENDA 2030

- The SDGs are indivisible and universal - they cannot be seen or treated in isolation.
- There needs to be open communication and strong accountability between partners within the Canadian policy landscape.
- The Canadian government must provide an enabling environment that allows for discourse among researchers, and from them to the public and private sectors.

TOWARDS BUILDING A CONSENSUS

- The SDGs accurately represent a different world, new challenges, and the possibility for better solutions.
- Sustainable development cannot only be viewed as an environmental concern.
- Newfound emphasis on a participatory approach to development.
- There is an overarching need for international cooperation; the SDGs must be tackled as a universal community.
 - Calls for more cohesion between actors (states, markets, economies).
 - Linking up of public and private sectors
 - Collective ownership of all 17 goals.

CLOSING REMARKS

- The 'D' in R&D often gets left behind; the international research community must place equal focus on research, development, and delivery of goals.
- A necessary emphasis must be placed on legitimate monitoring & evaluation systems.
 - There is currently an overabundance of pilot projects, all lacking long-term sustainability.
- Notion of creating shared value and learning from each other.

GOING FORWARD FROM INNOVATION 2030+

Indeed, there is certainly great potential in collaborating among a plethora of perspectives and expertise's to understand the optimal human, technological and economic resources needed to achieve sustainable development. Key focal points of the symposium included the potential of social mobilization, skill transfer, demographic and cultural consideration, technology implementation and, above all, partnerships, to effectively working towards the 2030 goals. Participants and speakers alike left the symposium more motivated in their work, and with a more refined awareness of bigger picture of the SDGs. The lunch that included the participatory breakout activity was an excellent opportunity for critical thinking and collaborative interactions, as it showed how different individuals with their respective viewpoints of a problem can develop a common ground to move forward in sustainable development. It instigated critical thinking on environmental goods and services, and how researchers and scientists who attempt to tackle the issues independently (or working in silos), could lead to increased detrimental effects on the sustainability and further aggravate environmental degradation.

The symposium successfully entertained a productive discourse on potential actionable solutions to revolutionize development, and gave participants the opportunity to engage with different perspectives to generate questions, concepts and ideas for achieving these goals.

- The Symposium's four featured start-ups will likely be participating in events such as these within McGill and all over Montreal.
- McGill's Global Food Security club will be hosting a Hackathon on World Food Day (October 16) to brainstorm a better world framed by the SDGs.

SPEAKER LIST

For biographies, please visit

<https://www.mcgill.ca/macdonald/about/events/innovation2030/innovation-2030-speakers-bios>

J. SCOTT ANGLE - International Fertilizer Development Center

GHISLAIN AUGER - Développement international Desjardins (DID)

CAROLINE BEGG - McGill University

MARGARET BIGGS - Queen's University & International Development Research Centre

SAMI GAIJI - Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

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TIM PREWITT - International Development Enterprises (iDE)

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